

Going, going: Brewer's bonanza on auction block

By Roger Boye

Some of the world's richest collectors will meet in Switzerland this week to bid on coin treasures assembled 70 years ago by the Chicago brewery baron Virgil M. Brand.

When he died in 1926, Brand owned 368,000 rare coins in what probably was then the world's most valuable coin collection in private hands. For many years, Brand hid much of the hoard in his apartment above the brewery near the 3200 block of North Elston Avenue.

His heirs gradually sold all but 20,000 of the coins, and 379 of those—each a foreign or ancient rarity—will be auctioned Thursday in Zurich by Sotheby Parke Bernet. The sale includes one of two known ancient gold pieces minted by the Romans, an item that could fetch \$150,000 or more.

Sotheby's will sell the other treasures in a series of about six auctions over the next two years, including at least one sale in New York. Although only a small part of the massive collection still is intact today, the remaining coins are worth as much as \$15 million, experts say.

Brand, a bachelor who had few close friends, nevertheless was active in Chi-

cago coin collector organizations. He was a charter member of the Chicago Numismatic Society, serving as its president in 1909.

In a paper presented to the society in 1905, Brand said the chief benefit of collecting was gaining knowledge, not making money.

"[Collecting] arouses so keen an interest in the objects collected that research and study concerning them, which otherwise would have been uninteresting and irksome and might have received little or no attention, become an attractive recreation," he wrote.

The last of his great collection is part of the estate of Jane Brand Allen, Brand's niece who died 11 months ago. She lived in Long Island, N.Y.

● Two United States senators have introduced legislation in Congress that would require Uncle Sam to mint silver dollars with the "Morgan design" last used in 1921.

The coins would be identical in composition and appearance to the old dollars, with each piece containing .77 of an ounce of silver. The legislation also would authorize the manufacture of a second coin containing 1 ounce of silver.

Idaho's two senators proposed the legislation to help the government in selling off its huge stockpiles of silver, but most experts say it has little chance of passage in both houses of Congress. If the bill becomes law without change, the coins would be made for three years starting in 1983.